

# AIRMAN & FAMILY READINESS NEWSLETTER

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## Special points of interest:

- Holiday Resilience
- Holiday Scams
- Holiday Events

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## DECEMBER'S FOCUS IS HOLIDAY RESILIENCE

The holidays can be stressful enough in a normal year but adding the challenges of COVID-19 means this year can be unusually stressful. With many already experiencing depression, anxiety or grief, the thought of navigating the season during these unusual times can be daunting.

To help cope with stress and still enjoy your holiday, here are some tips to remember during this season:

**COPING WITH HOLIDAY STRESS**

- 1 Get enough sleep and exercise
- 2 Avoid overspending
- 3 Don't focus on having the "perfect" holiday
- 4 Examine and then revise expectations
- 5 Don't be afraid to say no
- 6 Limit alcohol consumption & enjoy treats in moderation

**8 WAYS TO SAY NO DURING THE HOLIDAYS**

- 1 How exciting! Thanks for thinking of me. Honestly, my schedule is already so full that I'm trying to cut things out and not add anything new. I hope you have a lot of fun!
- 2 That sounds like so much fun, but during the holidays I am always exhausted, so I know I'll be too tired to really enjoy it. Have a great time!
- 3 What a great idea! I would normally love to go to something like that, but I'm already overcommitted. Maybe I can come next time.
- 4 I love that idea. Unfortunately, my family's budget is maxed out for the moment so we won't be able to make it. Thanks for thinking of us!
- 5 That sounds wonderful! Unfortunately, that falls on family night so I won't be able to join you. Maybe I can come next time.
- 6 That sounds great, but I've been running on empty lately and the thought of adding anything else to my schedule seems overwhelming. Thanks for thinking of me!
- 7 That sounds like a blast! My family and I just set our budgeting priorities for the month and we won't be able to fit this in too. Thanks anyway!
- 8 I'd love to help, but I'm not sure about our family's plans right now, so I'd hate to make a commitment and not follow through. I'll keep you updated if things change.

## The Naughty List of Holiday Scams This Season

As 2021 is rapidly coming to an end be aware of scams targeting you during a stressful time when you are most vulnerable. The Better Business Bureau (BBB) has released their Naughty List with the top 12 scams of Christmas that are most likely to lure consumers in and catch them off guard this season.

As scammers have gotten more creative and turned to online platforms to target individuals, social media and emails are the most popular target areas this year. With a shift to a more virtual world for work and shopping, be weary of social media ads about **discounted items, event promotions, job opportunities and donation requests**. If you are sent a direct message from a stranger requesting personal information or

asking for a payment or donation in any way, treat this as a red flag and report them to local authorities.

Check out the BBB Naughty List on page 2 for the top scams that are circulating this year and tips on how to avoid becoming a victim.

*Continued on page 2*



truth honesty  
trust honor  
integrity responsive  
promise

**Look for the “https” in the URL (the extra s is for “secure”) and a small lock icon on the address bar. Never enter payment or personal information into a website with only “http” – it is NOT secure.**

## BBB Naughty List of Holiday Scams continued...

1. **MISLEADING SOCIAL MEDIA ADS** As you scroll through your social media feed, you often see items for sale from a small business. Sometimes the business even claims to support a charity to try to get you to order, or they offer a free trial. BBB Scam Tracker receives reports of people paying for items that they never receive, getting charged monthly for a free trial they never signed up for, or receiving an item that is counterfeit or much different from the one advertised.
2. **SOCIAL MEDIA GIFT EXCHANGES** A newer version of this scam revolves around exchanging bottles of wine; another suggests purchasing \$10 gifts online. Another twist asks you to submit your email into a list where participants get to pick a name and send money to strangers to “pay it forward.” There is even a twist about “Secret Santa Dog” where you buy a \$10 gift for your “secret dog.” In all of these versions, participants unwittingly share their personal information, along with those of their family members and friends, and are further tricked into buying and shipping gifts or money to unknown individuals. And-- it's an illegal pyramid scheme.
3. **HOLIDAY APPS** Apple's App Store and Google Play list dozens of holiday-themed apps where children can video chat live with Santa, light the menorah, watch Santa feed live reindeer, track his sleigh on Christmas Eve, or relay their holiday wish lists. This holiday season, like last year when COVID-19 caused children to skip the traditional in-person visit with Santa, apps may play a more important role than ever. Review privacy policies to see what information will be collected. Be wary of free apps, as they can sometimes contain more advertising than apps that require a nominal fee. Free apps can also contain malware.
4. **ALERTS ABOUT COMPROMISED ACCOUNTS** Victims receive an email, call, or text message which explains that there has been suspicious activity on one of their accounts, and it further urges them to take immediate action to prevent the account from being compromised. Be extra cautious about unsolicited calls, emails, and texts.
5. **FREE GIFT CARDS** Scammers have been known to take advantage of this weakness by sending bulk phishing emails requesting personal information to receive free gift cards. In some of these emails, scammers impersonate legitimate companies like Starbucks and promise gift cards to loyal customers that have been supporting their business throughout the pandemic. They may also use pop-up ads or send text messages with links saying you were randomly selected as the winner for a prize. If you have received an unsolicited email with gift card offers, do not open it. Instead, mark it as Spam or Junk. However, if you opened the email, do not click on any links.
6. **TEMPORARY HOLIDAY JOBS** Retailers typically hire seasonal workers to help meet the demands of holiday shoppers. Shippers and delivery services are top holiday employers this year because of the increase in online orders and the need to get most of these packages delivered before Christmas. These jobs are a great way to make extra money, sometimes with the possibility of turning into a long-term employment opportunity. However, jobseekers need to be wary of employment scams aimed at stealing money and personal information from job applicants. Keep an eye out for opportunities that seem too good to be true.
7. **LOOK-ALIKE WEBSITES** Be wary of emails with links enclosed. Some may lead to look-alike websites created by scammers to trick people into downloading malware, making dead-end purchases and sharing private information. *If you are uncertain about the email, do not click any of the links. Instead, hover over them to see where they reroute.*
8. **FAKE CHARITIES** Typically, 40% of all charitable donations are received during the last few weeks of the year. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many organizations had to cancel their usual fundraising events and awareness campaigns and are now inviting donors to support online. Donors are advised to look out for fraudulent charities and scammers pretending to be individuals in need. Avoid impromptu donation decisions to unfamiliar organizations. Responsible organizations will welcome a gift tomorrow as much as they do today. Where possible, donate to the charity through their website and use a credit card.
9. **FAKE SHIPPING NOTIFICATIONS** More consumers are making purchases online, there is also an increase in the number of notifications about shipping details from retailers and carriers. Scammers are using this new surge to send phishing emails with links enclosed that may allow unwanted access to your private information or download malware onto your device. They may also try to trick people into paying new shipping fees.

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# HAPPY Holidays

**This season, we ask you  
to Connect to Protect  
with one another.**



**Department of Defense Connect to Protect:  
Support is Within Reach**

## BBB Naughty List continued

Continued from page 2...

10. **POP-UP HOLIDAY VIRTUAL EVENTS** This year, many local in-person events such as pop-up holiday markets or craft fairs, have moved online. Scammers are creating fake event pages, social media posts, and emails, charging admission for what used to be a free event. The goal is to steal credit card information. Confirm with the organizer of the event if there is an admission fee. In the cases where there is a charge, use a credit card. If the event is free, watch for scammers trying to claim otherwise.
11. **TOP HOLIDAY WISH LIST ITEMS** Low or ridiculously priced luxury goods, jewelry, designer clothing, and electronics are almost always cheap counterfeits and knockoffs. This year, the Galactic Snackin' Grogu Animatronic (aka Baby Yoda) and game consoles are some of the items in high demand. Be very cautious when considering to purchase these high-value items from individuals through social sites.
12. **PUPPY SCAMS** Many families, especially those with children, may be considering to add a furry friend to their household this year. However, you could fall victim to a pet scam, which are on the rise this year. Request to see the pet in person before making a purchase.

***“If it sounds too  
good to be  
true...  
It probably is.”***

### *What to do if you've spotted a scam-*

If you suspect you have found a scam or have been contacted by someone attempting to scam you please [report it to the local authorities!](#)

If you've spotted an online scam, please report it to the BBB Scam Tracker at:  
<https://www.bbb.org/ScamTracker>  
or scan the QR code for a **list or current scams** that have been reported and to **report any online scams**.





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## December Holiday Events

\*\*\* Please note, the Airman and Family Readiness Office and the 146th Airlift Wing are not endorsing these businesses or promotions.

### Ventura County

**December 11, 2021** Camarillo Christmas Parade (Free)

- Beginning at 10:00 am, the parade will start at Temple Ave. The Parade travels down Las Posas, turning onto Carmen Dr. and ending at the Community Center. For more information visit: <https://www.pvrpd.org/christmas-parade> or scan the QR code.



**December 17-18, 2021** Parade of Lights at Ventura Harbor (Free)

- The 2021 theme pays homage to all things ocean and sea – Back to Seality! We are looking forward to a very colorful Boat Parade and Harbor Village festivities! Soak up some holiday cheer with shimmering lights, whirling kid carnival rides, boutique gift shopping, delicious dining, and more. We'll SEA you there! Please visit <https://www.venturaharborvillage.com/parade-of-lights/?2021-12-17/> or scan the QR code for more information.



### LA County

**November 26-December 24, 2021** Christmas on the Farm, Moorpark (tickets start at \$7 for military)

- Christmas on the Farm at Underwood Family Farms in Moorpark is a family friendly event where you can see farm animals, have holiday photo ops, enjoy a tractor-drawn wagon ride, write letters to Santa, see animal shows and reindeer, and visit with Santa all included with admission. For more information scan the QR code or please visit: <https://www.underwoodfamilyfarms.com/christmas-on-the-farm/>



**December 10-12, 2021** Comedy is Coming to Town, Santa Clarita (tickets start at \$11)

- Featuring mistaken identities, family malfunctions and outrageous hijinks resulting in delightful madcap merriment to touching moments, Comedy is Coming to Town is a must see event to kick off your holiday season. For more information please visit <https://atthemain.org/> or scan the QR code.



**December 3-31, 2021** Holiday Road USA, King Gillette Ranch (tickets start at 34.99)

- Holiday Road is the premiere holiday experience. Expect to see some larger than life holiday displays, thousands of lights, Santa and Mrs. Claus, Elves, countless candy canes and all of your favorite holiday cheer! The trail itself is a 2/3 mile long walking trail and it is self-guided. Visitors are welcome to experience the attractions at their own pace. Enjoy a variety of food and beverages, capture those Instagram able moments, join in the fun with interactive experiences or visit "Holiday Bar" for a seasonal cocktail to take with you on the trail! Please scan the QR code for more information or visit <https://holidayroadusa.com/location-la>



**December 24, 2021** L.A. County Holiday Celebration (Free– must reserve a ticket)

- The annual L.A. County Holiday Celebration provides Angelenos of all ages an opportunity to come together on December 24, and both experience and honor the dynamic, rich cultures of the County. Over the past 60 years, many diverse L.A.-based artists and community groups showcase their talent, artistry and traditions on The Music Center's iconic Dorothy Chandler Pavilion stage. Please scan the QR code or visit <https://www.musiccenter.org/tickets/events-by-the-music-center/holidaycelebration/> for more information.

